

Five Rivers District Ministry Action Plan

The Five Rivers District Ministry Action Plan (MAP) is just what the name implies: a plan for action. It takes the four areas of focus for the Great Plains Conference: Know God, Proclaim Christ, Serve Others (especially the poor), and Seek Justice—and states clear outcomes and goals in each of these areas. It then gives concrete strategies, ideas, and action steps to help pastors, lay leadership, local churches and networks move closer to reaching those goals. But it is not a finished product. Rather, it is a dynamic resource for you to use in your mission field—to further seed your creativity and support you in your efforts to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Each of the desired outcomes (big goals) in the District MAP has its own strategies and action steps. However, there are several strategies common to all goals. They are:

- Churches and Networks will connect and collaborate to accomplish the mission.
- Conference personnel—including summer interns—will be deployed to support the efforts of pastors, congregations, and networks. Instructional videos and webinars will also be provided for regular use by local churches.
- Everyone is encouraged to use the resources available from the conference website, Church of the Resurrection, Lewis Center for Church Leadership, and the general church to support their work.
- Build church and community partnerships! Ask: “Who in our communities and congregations is already excited about making a positive difference?” Find those people—and partner with them!

The plan follows the KISS principle: Keep It Seriously Simple! Which means you can pick and choose a few ideas that work for you and leave the rest. Or improve on these strategies with some of your own. It’s all about connecting and collaborating to accomplish the mission—“many members”—contributing to the work of “one body.” (I Corinthians 12.14)

A quick shout out to the District Strategy Team and the clergy of the 5R district for all the conversations that have resulted in this MAP. I am grateful for you and to you. I’m glad we’re on the same team.

A team is a small number of people with complimentary skills committed to common purpose, performance goals, and mutual accountability.

A person can make a difference. A team can make a miracle.

--David Watson, District Superintendent

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Ministry Action Plan

Know God:

Objective/Outcome/Big Goal # 1: Spiritually Maturing Laity and Congregations. (This is number one because, according to the 2010 Towers-Watson research on vital congregations, of the four drivers of congregational vitality—Effective clergy, Spiritually Mature Laity, Passionate Worship, Strong Children’s/Youth Ministry—it is SPIRITUALLY MATURE LAITY who impact the most people in the mission field.)

IDEAS, STRATEGIES, ACTION STEPS:

1. The DS will conduct pastor/network leader workshops on the spiritual disciplines. Pastors and network leaders will then provide these workshops to their congregations/networks as a means of raising up disciples through the formation/strengthening of small discipleship groups in all congregations/networks on the district. Helpful resources:

- *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster
- *Covenant Discipleship* by David Lowes Watson
- *Developing an Intentional Discipleship System: A Guide for Congregations* by Junius B. Dotson
- *Disciple Bible Study*
- *Discipleshift: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples* by Putnam and Harrington
- *Catch Fire in Fifty Days* by Busick and Latana
- *Lead Like Wesley: Help for Today's Ministry Servants* by Mark Gorveatte
- *Unstuck Church* by Tony Morgan
- *The Emotionally Healthy Church* by Peter Scazzero
- *You Only Have to Die* by James Harnish
- *God's Country* (a novel) by Percival Everett (about small churches)

2. Time at every quarterly district clergy gathering and in all yearly clergy supervisory consultations will be devoted to the practice of the means of grace on a personal and congregational/network level.

3. Pastors and lay network leaders will spend intentional time getting to know their laity to learn what practices around the means of grace already exist in congregations. This will be a way to celebrate and encourage such gifts and practices in the laity.

4. Encourage everyone with the appropriate technology to use the new conference Smartphone Ap for spiritual health.

5. Pastors and lay network leaders will spend intentional time getting to know their laity to help them discover their spiritual gifts, identify what ministries interest and excite them, and discern how God is leading them to passionately pursue their calling. This objective is driven by the belief that great joy comes to those who match their gifts, interests, and calling with ministries that respond to human need and grow God's Kingdom. (Some resources for discovering spiritual gifts include UMC.org; L-3.)

6. Each congregation/network will hold focused and intentional conversations around how they are creating discipleship pathways for children and families to come into the church and faith life. Networks will work together to implement action steps to help create/strengthen such pathways.

7. District Clergy/Laity with expertise in small group discipleship ministries will be deployed to support these efforts.

8. Every pastor will be expected to lead (in partnership with lay leadership) at least one small accountable discipleship group each year. Small accountability groups are, after all, "The Method of Methodist Discipleship" (pp. 40-41 *Covenant Discipleship*, David Lowes Watson). Advent and Lent are prime times to introduce/experiment with this—with the objective of establishing ongoing accountability groups.

9. Developing a discipleship path

10. Networking resources and list of ministries

11. Integrated worship/Christian education curriculum

(The Strategy Team acknowledges that, while many of the above steps are “inward-focused”, the result of spiritual maturity is outward—fruitfulness in the mission field.)

Objective/Outcome/Big Goal # 2 (Know God): Clear Knowledge of Our Wesleyan Identity

IDEAS, STRATEGIES, ACTION STEPS:

- 1. Present district pastor workshops on Wesleyan tradition using *The Wesleyan Way* curriculum and other resources.
- 2. Pastors teach the workshops in local churches/networks
- 3. Bible study
- 4. Young adult or youth church
- 5. Network sermon series
- 6. Re-shape membership classes

Proclaim Christ:

Objective/Outcome/Big Goal # 1: Disciples Making New Disciples Through Witness & Service

IDEAS, STRATEGIES, ACTION STEPS:

- 1. Establish two “Fresh Expressions” (new ways of being church with those who do not come to church) in each district (Conference Congregational Excellence Team has committed to fund this strategy).
- 2. Pastors and lay leadership will experiment with ways to learn and better know their community/network mission fields by mapping them and connecting directly with their neighbors. The Mission Insite database is a resource for this. Another way is to create a detailed house-by-house map of a community, inviting church members to identify who lives where, and finding ways to build relationships with those unconnected with the congregation—thus building discipleship pathways into the church and faith life.
- 3. DS will present Faith Sharing Workshop to each network leadership team. Teams will then present to the networks.
- 4. Use the Guest Quest Sunday program or some similar “Bring a Friend” event idea. This will emphasize the importance of invitation as a means of evangelism.
- 5. Create mission trip opportunities for local churches and networks.
- 6. Create confirmation classes within networks.
- 7. Teach people how to share their faith (witness) – linking “The Story” to their story and the story of the potential new disciple.

8. Be clear about our “product” – we are not selling the “Church Institution” or even worship – we are offering Christ (relationships, purpose, service). The emphasis is on discipleship (following Christ) vs. church membership. (Tom Brady)
9. Each congregation/network will hold focused and intentional conversations around how they are creating discipleship pathways for children/families to come into the church and faith life. Networks will work together to implement action steps to help create/strengthen such pathways.
10. Mission Insite will be presented at district clergy gatherings. (Dorcia Johnson and Marcee Binder can do this).
11. Focus on people who are being touched by God. Help them find their passions and then make those passions godly.
12. Interview professional recruiters to learn their techniques of identifying and enlisting people. (Riley)
13. Personally contact people individually! Don’t make it a life sentence. Break the apathy and fear that keep people from serving. (LD)
14. This will be a topic at all clergy meetings and supervisory consultations.
15. Be present in hospital cafeteria, donut shop, rec center
16. Bible study
17. Financial Peace University
18. Use of social media
19. Recognize groups that operate in the community and have members of our churches as part of the groups and use that time to build relationships and share Christ.
20. Engaging in fellowship with other churches and non-church people.
21. Being aware of and promoting each other’s strengths.
22. Community confirmation classes
23. Pool resources and strengths for ministry.
24. Community gathering of fellowship. Fresh Expressions. Sacred Encounters.
25. Wednesday night meal. Free for all—like “Feeding Families” in Fort Scott.
26. Donuts and Devotions
27. Men’s work teams—“Good Neighbor Action Team”

Objective/Outcome/Big Goal # 2 (Proclaim Christ): Create a district-wide culture of welcome and service evangelism.

IDEAS, STRATEGIES, ACTION STEPS:

1. As churches partner with community groups, they will practice intentional evangelism while working side-by-side with other do-gooders and world-transformers. Each church will train each member to know how to do this. It is about starting with relationship-building.

2. Rural Freedom

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Objective/Outcome/Big Goal # 3 (Proclaim Christ): Legacy Churches Living On in Growing Communities

IDEAS, STRATEGIES, ACTION STEPS:

1. Churches/Networks will work through the resource *Finding the Faithful Path*. As a result, dying churches will become “legacy churches”—passing on their remaining resources to ministries which show readiness and promise for making new disciples.

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Serve Others (Especially the Poor):

Objective/Outcome/Big Goal # 1: —Alleviate Food Insecurity at Colleges/Universities on the District (Fewer students unsure of their next meal)

IDEAS, STRATEGIES, ACTION STEPS:

1. Connect campus ministries—ours and others.

2. Determine how best to get the word out about already available services. (Much is already happening around this, but many don’t take advantage of what is offered. Also, many of our church folk don’t know what’s available. Maybe what is needed is a communication piece.)

3. Utilize KU Alumni Associations

4. Use KU and Baker Greek systems to help collect and communicate

5. Identify who we want to feed—where do they live—and target those places.

6. Identify already existing food ministries and continue to support and partner with these.

7. Target breaks in the school year—this is when the need is greatest

8. Congregational dumpster diving initiatives
9. Campus ministers and ministries will be mobilized to partner with pastors, local churches and networks in this effort.
10. Onboard other key stake-holders through the mission field to support this effort.
11. Community gardens
12. Farmers' Market
13. Backpack meals for students. Senior boxes through commodity foods
14. Partner with Feeding America

Seek Justice:

Objective/Outcome/Big Goal # 1: Each year, in every community/mission field, change one thing for the better.

IDEAS, STRATEGIES, ACTION STEPS:

1. An initiative around veterans—particularly those who were raised in the church and feel they have violated their Christian beliefs/values because of going to war. Often what a warrior has had to do to stay alive on the battlefield can kill them after they return home. Help them find ways of healing, forgiveness and redemption for what they have seen and done.
2. The bullying culture in schools will be confronted and transformed into one of tolerance, understanding and support. Churches will work with school leaders to learn about the problem. Pastors/churches will partner with school/families to strategize ways to address the culture of bullying. Churches will work together to address any bullying aspects of congregational life. Use Covenant Discipleship Sprouts and Teen Groups to build a culture of support and accountability. Learn from community-based stake-holders what is working to address the problem—and partner with these efforts—offering a Christian witness in support of secular approaches. Establish “We Dine Together” chapters in every community school.
3. An initiative about immigration
4. Make a difference through our relationships with schools
5. Watch the “good news” stories on the network and cable news stations (two examples are “Inspiring America” and “Hoda’s Boost”—both on NBC). These are often examples of how “the kingdom of God is at hand,” as Jesus said. (Matthew 4.17b) Churches can be looking for similar examples in their own missions fields—and announcing the presence of the kingdom here and now. When we see signs of the presence of God’s kingdom, we can say: “That is how you behave in the kingdom of God! By doing what you have done, you have brought us closer to the kingdom! Good work! Keep it up!”
6. Have District Lay Leaders and Directors of Lay Servant Ministries asset map the laity, clergy, and congregational gifts and graces throughout the districts.
7. Churches will partner with other community efforts around a rallying point in each community.

8. Not only will the symptoms of problems be addressed, but the causes of the problems will be discussed, identified and confronted. This will result not just in symptomatic strategies, but curative strategies.

9. Reach out to local agencies to help with basic life skills (cooking, sewing, auto repair, carpentry, etc.)

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